

Meeting of the Northwest Arctic Subarea GRS Workgroup

April 29, 2011

Web-based Teleconference

Attendees:

Larry Iwamoto-ADEC

Peter Neitlich – National Park Service

Bud Rice- National Park Service

Mark Janes-Nuka Research

Doug Mutter- DOI

Amy Gilson- Nuka Research

Amy Cox – NOAA

Don Dragoo - USFWS

Tom Ukallaysaaq Okleasik – Northwest Arctic Borough

Zach Stevenson – Northwest Arctic Borough

John Chase – Northwest Arctic Borough

Mark Janes of Nuka Research and Planning Group introduced meeting attendees. Larry Iwamoto of ADEC thanked the participants and reviewed the NWA GRS project funding through the Federal Coastal Assistance grant and timeline for completion.

Mark Janes provided an overview of the meeting goal to finalize the first round of Geographic Response Strategy (GRS) development in order to provide sites for the tactics meetings at the end of May. Mr. Janes then reviewed the previous GRS workgroup meetings and their outcomes.

Mark Janes presented a brief description of GRS as oil spill response plans for smaller areas in Alaska. They are sponsored by ADEC and other state/federal agencies and cover the Subareas in Alaska, Southeast, Cook Inlet, Kodiak, Aleutian Islands, Prince William Sound, and are now addressing the Northwest Arctic. Each Subarea has worked through the GRS using the workgroup process in order to include local input as well as agency participation. Mr. Janes walked through the different parts of a final GRS pointing out photos, tactic maps, and site specific data table for each strategy (location, resources, equipment, personnel). This information is collected from state, federal, and local information compiled during the workgroup process. Sites are selected based on the following criterion:

- Environmentally Sensitive
- Risk of Exposure
- Easy of Implement

The main goal is to effectively provide a way to protect an area under the most ideal conditions. GRS are a way to alert Incident Command Systems (ICS) to the most valuable and sensitive areas needing protection in case of an event.

Larry Iwamoto reviewed the process of how the identified sites are developed emphasizing that the first phase of development is focused on the most sensitive sites identified but other locations may be developed as funding becomes available. Cook Inlet has 349 sites considered and 133 developed, the rest of the sites are slated for development under future funding.

GRS during a spill event would be prioritized by ICS – USCG, ADEC, and local Gov, input, Responsible Party, and those in charge of the response. Each situation is specific to conditions and location of the event.

GRS prioritization was established for the Northwest Arctic first using the Environmental Sensitivity Index Maps and to develop the Site Selection Matrix (SSM). Any areas with high concentrations of resources were highlighted as candidate sites, then presented to the workgroup for input and prioritization. The SSM is a living document that can be added to and revised as the workgroup desires.

Peter Neitlich (National Park Service) nominated additional GRS sites for high priority, sighting high subsistence use, white fish habitat and native allotments:

- Akulak Lagoon
- Kotlik Lagoon
- Imick Lagoon

The Northwest Arctic Borough (NWAB) has information regarding on going studies mapping important ecological areas for subsistence and resource development and would like to share this information with the project team, as this information may be used to help develop further GRS. National Park Service (NPS) also has additional information to add to the SSM regarding lagoons recently nominated, native allotments, and subsistence use. Mark Janes reminded the workgroup that the number of GRS sites for the NWA Northern Zone is 23 and is maxed out. Although the number of sites are capped, there are a few sites that could be switched out based on difficulty to implement tactic or other natural barriers, in order to include the 3 recently nominated sites.

Mr. Janes reviewed the prior meeting timeline:

September 2010 – kick off in person meetings in Kotzebue and Nome

January 2011 – SSM webinar, state, fed, local to develop high priority sites, 25 sights chosen but 33 sites left on the table. (Larry Iwamoto was able to procure additional funding to expand site development for phase one.)

February 2011 – Web meeting with NWAB Planning Commission regarding the additional funding and during this meeting they chose to develop 58 original high priority sites.

Mr. Janes presented the updated index map and discussed the color-coding for the sites. Green sites were selected during first round as high priority, the yellow sites were designated as high priority but not selected for development, and red sites were not selected for development nor designated as high priority. There was some confusion regarding the updated index map and which sites were actually slated for development. The group worked through identifying the correct sites and map and clarified that the sites selected were very important from a subsistence standpoint. The workgroup reviewed each site to confirm it's slated for development.

Tom Okleasik (NWAB) stated he had comfort in all the green sites for development, but now we need to look at the yellow and red to add or change for development. Mark Janes moved the group to review the yellow and red sites for development.

NWAB requested to review all the potential sites before making any decisions regarding development. Mark Janes review each site using Google Earth and resources to protect as listed on the SSM and fielded questions from the workgroup.

Tom Okleasik (NWAB) wanted to add Riley Wreck site to the SSM for as a high priority sight due to salmon, caribou hunting, native attolments, and fish camps in this area. The group discussed and agreed to add this to the SSM but not recommend it for development during phase one.

Mark Janes added the 3 lagoons nominated by Peter Neitlich (NPS) and asked the workgroup whether already selected GRS sites will cover the nominated lagoon entrances. The group agreed that two of the sites could be covered by current GRS selections. Franks Hays (NPS) has information regarding safety cabins in the area of these lagoons that should be listed on the GRS information tables.

Additional SSM or selected sites comments were solicited from workgroup. Mark Janes reviewed the additions and nominations made by workgroup, and the group agreed that the number of sites did not change most changes could be covered by adjusting the mapping component to include additional nominations.

There was a question regarding sites 14,15,16 and why inland selections were being considered. The group discussed the need to protect these areas because of barge routes for fuel, etc. up the river and fish migration routes and subsistence use. The workgroup presented the need to include ice edge information and marine mammal use and habitat into the GRS and SSM. The Subarea plan has information regarding this information but future study information should also be included as well as a seasonal component. Mr. Janes stated that current criterion for GRS development is based on seasonality and ability to implement the tactics. The group reviewed the criteria for selecting sites for consideration and a discussion followed regarding information to help prioritize sites for development and archeological areas that could potentially be negatively impacted by site development.

NWAB representatives were concerned with the Bering Strait and Kivilnia Coast areas needing further protection because they could potentially be most affected in the lease sale 193 Chucki Sea and they also expressed their difficulty narrowing selected sites. Doug Mutter (DOI) replied that GRS is one element of the overall oil spill plan and that Unified plans have tactics for other aspects of a spill response (wildlife hazing/collection, in-situ burning, dispersants, open water collection, (GRS) but this currently does not cover ice and seasonality, which needs be addressed. He then reminded the group that GRS is one element geared toward open water/shoreline is always based on weather conditions.

A workgroup member had a question regarding coverage on Cape Espenberg. Mark Janes explained that the site mostly captured lagoon behind cape, and that site 21 listed on the first index map dropped from the development phase for this round. NWAB approved the high prioritized sites for this round and agreed with the selected list of sites for the area.

Mark Janes then asked the group for input on the 23 sites selected for development. All 23 will be developed during this round of GRS and work needs to be completed by the end of June. The next phase is the tactics meeting the end of May, after which draft GRS will be distributed to the workgroup for review and final editing to be completed by the end of June. Aerial photography will not be part of this round of GRS and looking for input from any workgroup members who may have photos of the sites and potentially looking to place information into GIS format.

Action Items:

- A meeting summary will be developed and circulated for review
- In the NWA Northern Zone: Lagoons will be added as high priority sites
- Mark Janes get in touch with Peter Neitlich for 3 lagoon site.
- Peter Neitlich provide known safety cabin locations to Mark Janes.
- A new SSM and Index Maps will be developed reflecting the updated sites selected, including information from for Lagoons and Riley Wreck
- Tactic maps will be drafted that will show the selected sites and will display the resources that need protection at each site
- A Tactics Committee will be convened consisting of local individuals, response professionals, ADEC, Nuka Research and the USCG. This group will draft response plans for the selected sites.
- The plans will be put in the GRS format and put forth for public review. Edits and comments will be collected from the workgroup and incorporated in the plans.
- The workgroup may choose to meet again for a final review and approval of the plans.